

insure them while the insurance companies—company or companies that write these medical savings accounts will reap all kinds of benefits from the Medicare Program.

So in addition to that \$180 billion that GINGRICH wants to cut Medicare, you are going to see more money of what is left going into these insurance companies through these medical savings accounts and the elderly and the beneficiaries for Medicare will have fewer and fewer dollars, will pay more and more for those benefits as they continue to decline and wither.

Mr. PALLONE. I do not have the exact number, but I know that the Congressional Budget Office actually estimated that the medical savings accounts would cost the Medicare system billions, billions and billions, in extra dollars.

So here we have a Republican plan that supposedly is cutting Medicare to save money for whatever reason we know as tax breaks for the wealthy, and the CBO is telling us it is actually going to cost more because of the special interests and the save provision.

Ms. DELAURO. The Consumers Union; those are the people who publish the Consumer Reports that so many people in this country rely on if they are going to buy an automobile or an appliance or, you know, they take a look at that and they can tell you what the best, you know, what the best buy is, has described the medical savings accounts as a time bomb and that it will just, you know—has a potential of skimming off the top the healthy, the healthiest and the wealthiest of seniors out of the system leaving the most frail, the most ill, and thereby driving the costs of premiums up. In addition to that, of shifting, helping to shift once again, the cost shifting argument of people who are in traditional programs having to pick up the costs of some of these, you know, the increased costs and these premiums.

But there again that is all for, you know, the special interest effort of the Golden Rule Insurance Co.

Mr. PALLONE. I know that we are running out of time here tonight, but I just wanted to thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. BROWN] for joining me and again all we are trying to point out on this 31st anniversary of Medicare is how important the program is and how the Republican efforts basically to cut Medicare to pay for these tax breaks for the wealthy and the changes that they are proposing in the Medicare program will essentially do what the Republicans have said they wanted to do from the beginning, either eliminate Medicare or change it so much that it really does not provide the quality of health care services and the level of health care services that senior citizens should have, and I just want to thank both of you for fighting this battle now.

You pointed out to me, Congresswoman DELAURO, that it is actually 30

months now; I am losing track of time. It is not 18 months, it is 20 months that we have been fighting this battle, and, of course, so far we have been winning, but we do not want people to forget that the Republicans are still out there trying to essentially destroy Medicare as we know it.

Ms. DELAURO. And they will tell you that they are trying to save it, but let me just say this is a value, health insurance for seniors, that has stood the test of time. In fact, let us try to make it better. Let us build on the quality that has allowed for 99 percent of our seniors to have health insurance.

Let us look at how we can make sure that we bring down the cost of prescription drugs, that we provide for home health care which can help bring down the cost of health care, look at long-term health care so people get some relief in that area.

Why are we wanting to take the system that is truly working? Let us fix what is wrong, but let us not destroy something that people have come to rely on in their lives.

Mr. PALLONE. You know, it is sort of ironic because when we started our health care task force, which all three of us are part of, our Democratic health care task force last year, we established two basic principles. One was that we wanted to get more people insured, and the other was that we wanted to improve the quality of care, and it is unfortunate that that is not what the debate has been about. That is what we would like to see, but that is not what the debate has been about.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. All you have to do is look back 30 years, 31 years in the celebration today of the 31 years since Medicare was signed. Thirty-one years ago half the people in, half the elderly in this country had no health insurance. This is a Government program that works. Ninety-nine percent of America's elderly now have health insurance. We can make it better, but do not dismantle it, do not privatize it, do not turn it over to these special interest groups, these big insurance companies that have given a lot of money to politicians just so they can play with this huge program that has served the American public well.

We have got to deal with costs, we have got to deal with some of the difficulties of Medicare, but it is a program that works. It is a program that has taken care of our parents and our grandparents, and we have got to make sure it takes care of them and it takes care of our generation and the next generation, and we can do that. But it works because it is universal. It works because it insures everybody. It insures black people, and white people, and brown people. It insures Republicans and Democrats. It does not matter, the rich and the poor. It insures everybody, and it works because it is a broad-based insurance program.

Do not let insurance companies peel off the most healthy people and let them benefit from that and leave ev-

erybody else in a sinking ship. Medicare works because it is universal, because it helps everybody in this country, and we just should not mess with it that way.

Ms. DELAURO. We know that in order to bring the cost of health care down that more people have to be insured so that the costs are shared, and we are struggling with how we do that. One of the pieces that we have in the families' first agenda is trying to insure children from zero to 13 years old. But we are trying to get to a point where—because when people are not insured, those, when they get sick, the cost of that health care goes someplace. It just does not evaporate, or disappear.

It winds up that everybody else picks up a portion of it. That is this whole cost shifting idea, and sometimes it is mind-boggling to me that the one system that we have that insures 99 percent of the particular population which helps to keep the costs down is the one that they are going after to try to dissipate to break up, to dismantle, when what we ought to be doing is finding out how we can insure children from zero to 13.

How do we get more people insured who are sharing the costs, not getting a free ride? Nobody should get a free ride, but are sharing the cost of picking up their health care costs or a portion of their health care costs so that those who are insured are not having to pay twice, their own and someone else's.

That is what this is about.

Mr. PALLONE. I think you are making a good point. The bottom line is we know if you see these cuts in Medicare that the Republican leadership is proposing, it is going to have a negative impact on the health care system in general. In my district, and I am sure in the gentlewoman's, I have so many hospitals that are over 50 percent, some over 60 percent, Medicare- and Medicaid-dependent. If you make these cuts you are going to hurt the health care system in general.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Edwin Thomas, one of his secretaries.

AUTHORIZING THE CLERK TO CORRECT SECTION 585 IN ENGROSSMENT OF H.R. 3592, WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that in the engrossment of the bill, H.R. 3592, the Clerk be directed to make a correction to section 585 to change the reference from "Evansville, Illinois" to make it "Evanston, Illinois."

Mr. Speaker, this request has been cleared with the majority.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Is there objection to the